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INDIGENOUS IDEALS IN PRACTICE

A

Survey of the Evangelistic and Church Work
in the District of
SIAOCHANG, NORTH CHINA

Rowlands, W. F.

Second Impression

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Survey of the Evangelistic and Church Work
in the District of

SIAOCHANG

with some reference to developments
during the decade 1914-1924

Second Impression

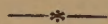
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FOREWORD



THIS Survey of the Evangelistic and Church Work in Siochang was written by the Rev. W. F. Rowlands in collaboration with his colleagues at that station in North China. We earnestly commend it and the work of the London Missionary Society in some of its country fields in China, to the careful attention of Missionaries of all Societies. The WORLD DOMINION PRESS is glad to receive information from any field or Missionary Society which will enforce and illustrate the indigenous ideals for which it stands.

THOMAS COCHRANE, *Editor.*

A Survey of the Siaochang District

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The Station of Siaochang in the North China province of Chihli is the mission residential centre for an area of fourteen counties. The area of this district is about 7,600 square miles, or rather larger than Wales. The population is estimated at between five and six millions. On an average there are about 400 villages to a county. Cities, market towns and market villages number about 300. That works out at about one market centre to every twenty villages, and it is hoped as a first stage in the complete evangelization of the district to see a church planted in each twenty-village area, either in the market town, or in one of the twenty villages. Each of these churches should then be able to evangelize the whole of the twenty villages. Frequent references are made to the neighbouring Tsangchow district which is one of nine counties, and where a similar policy is being followed.

THE CENTRAL STATION.

The visible results of work in Siaochang itself and the immediate neighbourhood are not very encouraging. For many years the Central Church has been linked with four smaller churches. The whole group formed an Independent Church and supported a pastor who had oversight of the whole group. This group, after many vicissitudes, has, through financial weakness, reverted to the charge of the Mission. Regular services are carried on in the Central Church, while the four associated churches together with a church in Tsaoch'iang city, three or four miles south of Siaochang, are supplied with preachers every Sunday. Recently there are signs of increased interest and support, and the group may revive and take over responsibility for Hengshui County, near Siaochang. Evangelistic work

is done by visiting homes in Siaochang and neighbourhood and by preaching at fairs in the neighbourhood. Important evangelistic work is also being done in the two Mission Hospitals, and in the Boys' and Girls' Schools. In the hospitals regular services are held in each ward, much personal work with the patients is steadily carried on, and the script is taught to all who are willing to learn. The results of this faithful work are not easily estimated, but they are certainly very large. Not many patients are baptized in hospital, for it is our policy to baptize, as far as possible, at the church which is nearest to the village of the person baptized, but a good many "take the covenant" (especially the men), a larger number register their names as enquirers, and the great majority learn to read the script more or less perfectly. Sometimes a patient converted in hospital, on returning home, will gather a group of interested enquirers in his own village, and ultimately a church may grow up in that place. This kind of result would no doubt happen more frequently if the work done in the hospital were followed up more closely, and the new converts encouraged and strengthened by visits or letters; closer co-operation between the Evangelistic and Medical branches of the work for this end is one of our greatest needs. In addition to the above, certain classes for the whole district, both for men and women, are held in the central station from time to time, and it also forms a convenient meeting place for Preachers' Conferences, District Church Councils, etc.

THE COUNTRY FIELD.

In addition to Siaochang itself, there are now well over ninety villages in the district where there are groups of Christians who meet for worship, and who do in some sense constitute a church. The organization and work of these churches will be spoken of below; here a few facts concerning their distribution and present condition may be presented.

Out of a total of fourteen counties, three are still practically untouched, viz., Wuch'iang, Fuch'eng and

Chingchow, while in two others there has been practically no progress in the past ten years, viz., Kuch'eng and Tsaoch'iang. In the remaining nine counties there has been definite increase in the number of Christians, and the churches are for the most part alive and active ; though in some of these counties the progress has been slow, or only recent, and the ground is still but lightly held (*e.g.*, Chichow, Hengshui, Chinchow), the forward movement is clearly marked even here, and in others the advance has been rapid and continuous, especially in Ningchin and Nankung.

Generally speaking, the work in the south, west and north is advancing ; the work in the central and eastern counties is stationary ; while in the north-eastern section, where our field adjoins the Tsangchow field, it has scarcely been begun.

Compared to ten years ago, when some fifty places were occupied, the progress is very considerable. Thus in the two counties of Ningchin (W.) and Nankung (S.), where in 1914 there were some ten centres, there are now about forty, and this number is rapidly growing. In the three counties off Chinchow (N.W.), Shulu (N.W.), and Shenchow (N.) there were in 1914 only five places occupied ; now there are some eighteen churches. The county of Hsinho (S.W.) a few years ago was without a single church ; now there are five places where groups of Christians meet for worship.

It should be noted that the ninety churches spoken of above are mostly in villages, not in market towns, and in some parts, *e.g.*, Ningchin, the churches are very close together, sometimes even in adjoining villages a mile or two away. There are not, therefore, as yet ninety market centres occupied—a fact which has a bearing on the task of evangelization of the district.

STAFF.

The staff of foreign missionaries consists of four married men (including one doctor) and two single women. One of the greatest needs is for more women missionaries to

take advantage of the opportunities which are offering on every hand.

The Chinese evangelistic staff numbers fourteen men, including a hospital evangelist, and nine women, including one voluntary worker and two on trial. Of the men, one has had an Arts and Theological training, eight are of higher primary grade education, plus two or three years of Bible School training. Two are blind preachers trained in an Institute for the Blind, and the remainder have been trained locally by one of the missionaries. The number is small for so wide a field, and more are needed. None of the women workers learnt to read until adult age, and most of them have been trained in local classes. There is a crying need not only for more, but for better educated and better trained women, and especially women with more initiative and greater capacity for leadership.

Teachers of Phonetic Script.—There are three of these in permanent work, two in the hospitals and a phonetic writer, and a varying number of part-time workers, who teach in the country field in the winter and spring. These teachers are men and women chosen from the churches for their Christian character and zeal, and for their knowledge of the script. Before being sent out to the field, they are given not only intensive training in the method of teaching phonetic to illiterates, but also brief special instruction in the Bible lesson courses, so that they may be able to teach the elements of the Gospel story as well as the script.

Comparing the above staff with that of 1914, we may note several important differences :

1. The preachers are no longer pastors of individual churches, but are *evangelists* appointed to a definite area, with a twofold responsibility : first to evangelize the whole area assigned to their care, and, secondly, to conserve the work already done and keep in touch with churches already formed. This mobility allows for much more extensive work, and a far wider field is being covered to-day, even though the number of preachers has fallen from twenty-four to fourteen.

2. There has been a marked advance in *women's work*. Whereas in 1914 there were only two Biblewomen as against twenty-four preachers, to-day there are nine Biblewomen compared to fourteen men evangelists—though, as shown above, the standard of training of the women is far below that of the men.

3. An entirely new element is the emphasis on phonetic work. The teachers of the script have been, and still are, entirely supported from funds privately subscribed, and the number of workers fluctuates a good deal according to the funds available. New as they are, this type of worker is now felt to be indispensable in evangelism, and they are especially valuable in helping new groups of enquirers and acting as forerunners of the Gospel.

Evangelists in Training.—These are only partly on the staff, but as prospective workers they should be referred to at this point.

1. At present there is a group of eight men who are being tested as candidates for training in Tsangchow, with a view to forming part of the Clark Evangelistic Band (to be referred to later). All of these are men of good Christian character who have had experience of Christian work, either in their own churches or as phonetic teachers and assistant preachers. Of these probably six will go in the autumn of this year to undergo a course of two years' training, in company with other prospective members of the Clark Band, under Mr. Jowett Murray, in the neighbouring Tsangchow field.

2. It is greatly to be hoped that a new group of men, chosen from those trained for phonetic teaching, or direct from the churches, will be trained locally this coming winter with the object ultimately of filling up the gaps in our staff. This training on the field will not be sufficient in itself, and will need to be supplemented by further study in Tsangchow or elsewhere, but as a preparation for practical service it is indispensable.

3. A graduate of the Siaochang Girls' School is now in training as a Biblewoman in Peking, and it is expected

that she will be ready for work in the summer of 1926. She will be the first Biblewoman on the staff who has had both a good education and special Bible training, but we hope that in the coming years many more like her will dedicate themselves to this service.

4. It is expected that in the autumn of 1925 a new Women's Bible School will be opened in Tsangchow, on lines similar to, and in conjunction with, the Men's Bible School (Arthington Institute) under Mr. Murray. Probably about half of our present staff of Biblewomen will go to Tsangchow for two years' training. The Women's staff will, therefore, be seriously weakened for the time, and other workers will be needed to fill the gaps, but ultimately the staff will be greatly strengthened and the standard of efficiency raised to a much higher level.

EVANGELISTIC POLICY.

The policy of the Mission in evangelistic work is to *plant the church throughout every part of the Siaochang field*. This means :

1. That *a large number of village churches* be founded, so that the Gospel and opportunity for worship may be put within the reach of every man, woman and child in the district. The very minimum number of churches required to fulfil this condition is one for each market area—in other words, at least one church for every twenty villages, or a total of three hundred churches for the whole area.

2. That *these churches should be self-supporting*, both in material things, buildings, finance, etc., and in spiritual.

This evangelistic policy was instituted in 1913 after the visit of Mr. S. J. W. Clark in that year and the survey of the district which was made by him and the local missionaries. As a result of that survey a new vision of the great work that still remained to be done was gained, and the need for going forward to possess the whole land and preach the Gospel "to every creature" in the district was emphasized. The churches already formed were, therefore, asked to co-operate by bearing a larger share

of their own burdens, while the preachers were set free for the wider work of evangelism. Two kinds of bands were formed: (1) *preaching bands* to act as *storm troops* for attacking new centres, and (2) *nurture bands* for consolidating ground already won. For several years these bands carried on their work in different parts of the district with varying success. In some places the preaching bands worked for a year or two with no apparent results, while in other places perhaps one small group of believers would be the fruit of much labour. During the middle part of the period under review, 1917-20, there was tendency to discouragement and dissatisfaction with the new policy, due partly to an imperfect grasp of the principles underlying it, and a sense that, while with great toil we were winning only a little ground, many of the older churches were losing ground, and partly to the European War and the extreme tenuity of the foreign staff during those years. Since 1920, however, there has been a great change, and the policy is now, for the most part, accepted wholeheartedly by the preaching staff and carried out loyally. This change is due to a variety of reasons, increase in the foreign staff and the influence of the Famine Relief work of 1920-21; also to the adoption of a somewhat different plan of distributing the workers, appointing them to definite areas, which they are responsible for evangelizing and occupying. But the chief cause is that the policy itself has "caught on." The work is gathering momentum as it goes forward; the churches are growing by a sort of geometric progression, and the success of the policy is becoming evident to all the workers. The results achieved have added zest to the work, and created a new spirit of hopefulness and triumph in the men and women who bear the responsibility for evangelizing the district.

EVANGELISTIC METHOD.

The method pursued in carrying out the above policy may be divided into three stages. Brief statements of these will give an opportunity for setting forth the distinctive features of the work of the past decade.

I. The First Stage is that of Breaking Ground.

Two chief methods have been used for this task :

(a) **Preaching.**—For the first years of the period under review much time was given by the Mission “preaching bands” to direct evangelism, chiefly in selected centres. This work still needs to be done, especially in those counties where little ground has been won hitherto, and we are preparing for a great Forward Movement in the next ten years which, we hope, will result in opening up all parts of the district. But there are also two new factors which must greatly affect the emphasis on direct evangelistic preaching by the Mission staff. (i.) The *Churches* already formed are *beginning to unite* in a very definite way for special evangelistic efforts. In these the Churches take the initiative and the Mission acts as a helper. Thus each year in Ningchin county about a dozen churches unite for a three days’ evangelistic campaign at a big temple fair, and themselves meet practically all the expenses involved. The evangelists do the bulk of the actual preaching, but the Christians are present in large numbers to assist in any way they can, and the whole effort is in the nature of a big demonstration of Christian forces in that region. The attention given to the preaching and the interest shown by the people is considered to be quite remarkable. Again, in the Week of Evangelism, held just after the Chinese New Year, when the preachers are all at their own homes, the whole burden, both of organizing bands and of preaching, is borne by the Christians themselves. Generally a group of churches will unite to form a band, each appointing one or two representatives, and during the period assigned the band will visit in successive days many of the surrounding villages and preach to the people in the open. This year (1925) some eight bands of this sort were formed, and the Christians were greatly encouraged by the welcome and attention given to them in almost every instance. (ii.) Further, a great deal of *personal evangelism* is done in an informal and unofficial way by ordinary Christians, who tell their relatives and friends in other villages about their

new-found joy. It is clear that this is the largest single factor in evangelism to-day, and it is largely due to this continual passing-on of the Word from one to another that we find so many groups of enquirers suddenly springing up in villages which no preacher has ever visited.

(b) **The Field Hospital.**—The plan of opening a temporary hospital at some important centre in the district has been tried several times in this district as in Tsangchow, and its success has more than justified the experiment. The last of these was held, in 1923, in Hsinho city, which was then virgin soil for the Gospel, and was carried through by two hospital assistants with the help of a leading preacher and a phonetic teacher. From many points of view it proved a most valuable effort. A large number of patients were seen and helped; preaching was faithfully done day by day; and each evening all the staff assisted in teaching the phonetic script to at least fifty scholars of all ages. The result was that a great many in this new county heard the Gospel and received physical benefit, and out of these was gathered a little group of men and women who professed faith in Christ and became the nucleus of the church in Hsinho city.

We are convinced that the Field Hospital is one of the finest methods of spreading the Gospel which we possess, uniting as it naturally does all branches of the work (medical, evangelistic and educational), and there are now immense opportunities, especially in our Western district, for this practical mode of preaching the Gospel of Love. As a second foreign doctor has now been promised for Siaochang, we may look for a great development of this side of the hospital work in the coming years, and for such co-operation with the evangelistic branch of the work as will lead to the opening of all the hitherto untouched areas of our field.

2. **The Second Stage is that of Building the Church.**—When, by any of the above means, a group of enquirers has been formed, the problem at once arises, How shall they be built up into a strong, self-supporting,

self-propagating church? One mode of dealing with this problem is along two lines:

(a) **Instruction of Converts.**—Most of the enquirers are plain country people of the farming class; few have had any education, and few know much about Christian truth. Instruction, therefore, has to start from the very foundation. (i.) First they must be *taught to read*. Probably eight out of every ten villagers are illiterate, and our first task is to seek to give them the means by which they can read the Bible for themselves; for only so can they become strong and intelligent Christians. During the past ten years increasing emphasis has been laid on the value of the *phonetic script* (Wang-Peill system), as this is the only system known to us which can be learnt easily by illiterates. Much time has been spent by the missionaries, in conjunction with our Tsangchow colleagues, in preparing books in phonetic and in propagating the script, and it is our habit, whenever a group of enquirers is gathered, first of all to send them a phonetic teacher and urge all who are illiterate to learn to read at the outset. We have also endeavoured to teach Christians in the older churches the use of this script, and though our efforts are not always successful, a good many illiterate church members have now become Bible readers, and their faith has thereby received a new stimulus. It cannot be said that illiteracy has been yet abolished in our churches, but we are slowly drawing nearer that goal, and the total number of men and women, previously illiterate, who can now read the Bible intelligently is very considerable. Several Siao-chang missionaries have helped from time to time in the production of *phonetic books*, but the two chief books, which are almost entirely the work of members of our staff, are the New Testament and the Hymnbook. The complete New Testament was prepared and seen through the Press by Dr E. J. Peill in 1921, and the Hymnbook, which was issued in 1922, is the work of Rev. W. F. Rowlands. The *sale* of phonetic literature in the last ten years has been very great, and edition after edition of some books, the Primer, New

Testament Selections, and some of the Gospels, have been issued. The first edition of the Hymnbook (2,000 copies) is now sold out and a second edition is already issued. The whole New Testament is selling slowly but steadily ; it is only those who read the script really well who venture to buy the complete book, but as these increase in number so will the sales also increase. Statistics of literacy and the number of phonetic readers are not yet available, but the following facts may be mentioned : practically every church has a few men or women, previously illiterate, who can read the script really well, together with others who read slowly or uncertainly ; and there are some to whom, thanks to the script, the Bible has become a priceless treasure. The benefit of the script is most clearly noticeable in regard to women Christians. Practically all village women are illiterate, and those who can now read owe their ability to the phonetic. Even women of fifty and sixty sometimes learn to read in this way, but they are not prevented from entering the church if they are not able to do so. Practically all younger women, however, who take the covenant or are baptized, are able to read the script, and there are very few young illiterate women church members to-day. A rough comparison made in 1922 between the Christians in a group of older churches (in the Eastern district) and those baptized in that year (chiefly in the Western district) showed that, whereas less than fifty per cent. of the former were able to read, about seventy per cent. of the latter were literate. When allowance is made for those of advanced age, or poor eyesight or other infirmity, it will be seen that there cannot be many young or middle-aged Christians in this latter group who are still illiterate. (ii.) A second feature of the work of instruction is the use of a *course of Bible lessons* in preparation for church membership. In common with Tsangchow, we have divided this preparatory period into two stages, "taking the covenant," when the enquirer definitely becomes a disciple of Christ, and baptism, by which he further becomes a church member. Generally a period of at least six months' probation is required before each of these steps is taken,

and a series of appropriate lessons has been drawn up for those desiring to join the church. The "covenant" course covers briefly some of the main facts of Christ's life and the chief Christian doctrines; the Baptism course reviews the life of Christ, using different Biblical material, and more particularly deals with the church, the responsibility of church membership and the Christian life. All enquirers are required to go through this course under the leadership of an evangelist, and if, in addition to giving evidence of real faith and Christian character, they show, on examination, a good knowledge of Christian truth, they may be accepted successively as a "covenanter" and full church member. This whole course of lessons is contained in a volume of New Testament Selections (originally prepared by Dr. S. G. Peill) printed in both Chinese character and phonetic, and this may be regarded as the standard textbook for those preparing to enter the Church. As a supplement to the Baptism course, there is a small book on the Church by Mr. Jowett Murray, also printed in character and phonetic, which is now coming gradually into use and is being found very helpful.

The result of the systematic use of this lesson course during the last few years has been to raise the standard of Bible knowledge and intelligence in the church very considerably, and we are able to feel not only that illiteracy is being steadily reduced, but also that the Christians are beginning to have a standing in the truth and to be able to give some reason for the faith that is in them. Our evangelists affirm very definitely that there is a great difference in the intelligence and understanding of the average Christian to-day compared with the converts of the previous decade. (iii.) A word may also be added concerning instruction through *hymns and singing*. A great change has taken place in regard to the kind of hymns and tunes used in the district, owing to the introduction of a considerable number of native Chinese hymns and melodies, in place of the hymns translated from the English and foreign tunes which were used almost entirely in past years. A new Hymnbook, printed in both character and

phonetic, has been issued, containing, in addition to the most familiar hymns of foreign origin, a number of Chinese hymns (including several by Pastor Hsi, of Shansi) ; and a large proportion of the tunes used are either actual native melodies, or are "pentatonic" tunes which are readily learnt by the Chinese. A system of phonetic sol-fa has also been devised, and the air of each hymn is printed by the side of the words.

These new hymns have several great advantages : (1) they are mostly in simple language and are easily understood ; (2) the thought and build of the hymns are characteristically Chinese, and are easily learnt and remembered ; (3) the tunes are quickly picked up and sung with both vigour and accuracy. It is not surprising, therefore, that they have speedily become popular and are widely used. The singing of our churches has both improved in quality and increased in quantity, and the emotional and educative value of these "Chinese hymns for the Chinese" can hardly be over-estimated.

(b) The organization of the Church.—Hand in hand with the instruction of converts in Christian truth go the organization of the group into a Christian church. Ten years ago, as already indicated, the basis of church organization was changed and the *principle of self-support from the start* was laid down. It has taken many years to establish and work out this principle, but to-day it is fairly well understood throughout the district and generally accepted as the only possible basis for a church.

In practice this principle involves four things : (i.) Each group of Christians is expected to *provide its own place* of worship, and all necessary equipment, such as tables, benches, etc. At present most of the village churches meet in borrowed and therefore temporary buildings, but a number have already acquired property of their own, either by building or by buying or in other ways. These church buildings are generally ordinary houses (made of mud bricks) adapted for meeting purposes and consist of anything between two and five "chien" or

“rooms.” Practically every group of believers has some such place of worship, and though it is often very small and mean, yet it is *theirs* and suffices for their present needs. There are still a number of buildings in the district which belong to the Mission, and these constitute a very serious problem under our present policy. Some of them are in important centres, and are valuable for evangelistic purposes, but others are in villages, where, in some cases, there are scarcely any Christians to use them. Some of these buildings are slowly crumbling to pieces, and it is difficult to know what to do with them; others again have been sold, and the proceeds used to repair some of the more valuable pieces of property in strategic centres.

(ii.) They are also required to *meet their own current expenses*, for example, for heating, lighting and the upkeep of their property. These expenses are often fairly heavy, thanks to the long, cold winter and the heavy summer rains, and many churches find the burden as much as they can bear. As a general rule special collections for church funds are taken at the wheat harvest or the autumn harvest; and if the harvests are good, the subscriptions are often quite generous.

(iii.) Each church is also expected to *manage its own business*, that is, all such matters as finance, arrangements for services, admission of new members, and dealings with other churches or the Mission. Technically, only a church with twenty-five baptized members is recognized as a “T’ang I Huei” (or “Local Church”), but in practice every group of Christians is more or less organized for carrying on the business of the church. Each church, too, will have at least one deacon, to attend to the miscellaneous affairs of the church, together with one or more men carrying out the duties of secretary, treasurer and accountant.

(iv.) Finally, each group of Christians is responsible for *conducting their own services for worship and edification*. As by our system an evangelist is seldom available for the conduct of worship in any one church, the responsibility for these spiritual duties must fall on the local church members. Generally it is arranged that two or three shall lead in turn, so that each Sunday there is some one person

in charge of the service of worship. In many places, in addition to the Sunday services, week-evening services are also held, and in some cases, during the winter months, meetings will be held every night of the week.

It can easily be seen that the above plan gives great scope for the development of the "spiritual gifts" of the Christians, and many are already revealing distinctive abilities in certain directions. Some are only able to do rough elementary work such as running errands to other churches, sweeping the yard, carrying water, etc.; others reveal great aptitude for the manifold duties of the deacon, including many miscellaneous tasks which must be done by somebody; others again show a special capacity for spiritual things and are able to teach their fellow members the deeper truths of the Gospel; while a few, partly by virtue of position and influence, and partly by general character and good repute, are clearly marked out as all-round leaders of the little groups. It is evident, too, that many whose "gift" may not be known do hidden work in recommending the Gospel to others by word of mouth or by deed, and, as shown above, the spread of the church is chiefly due to such as these, the humble rank and file of Christ's army.

Not only spiritual "gifts," but also spiritual "graces" have abundant opportunity for expression and growth in these little Christian communities. We cannot say that the "fruits of the Spirit" have as yet been manifested in a superlative degree in these churches, yet there is already discernible in many places a new spirit of love and brotherhood which is different from anything known before, and which will, we trust, become in time an active principle dominating every part of their lives and expressing itself in a harvest of good deeds. As an illustration of the new sense of oneness and brotherhood which is growing up, we may instance the collections which were taken in a large number of churches last autumn on behalf of those Christians whose land had been flooded by the torrential rains in the summer, and who were thus deprived of their livelihood. About \$80 were subscribed by the churches for

these famine sufferers, and though it was little enough for so great a need, it represents a degree of sympathy and perhaps of sacrifice which is not to be despised.

3. The Third Stage is that of Consolidating the Work. In a system like ours the great danger is that of too rapid advance and a too superficial foundation. There is a real peril lest these churches be like the seed sown on the rocky soil, which springs up quickly and as quickly withers away. Conscious of this danger, we are seeking more and more to consolidate the churches in such a way that they may stand and grow and multiply. The keynotes of this part of our work are Fellowship, Progress and Service, and the following means are being employed to achieve these aims :

(a) **By frequent visits of evangelists and missionaries** we seek to keep in close touch with these churches already formed. As mentioned earlier, the preachers, though mobile, are also "area-lized," *i.e.*, appointed to a definite area comprising one or more counties, and it is as much their duty to conserve the work already done as to open up new work. In the larger areas two or three preachers may be appointed to the work ; in this case, the leading preacher will also have something of a superintendent's function, and he will often act as a "moderator" in matters where counsel and advice are needed.

(b) **By various kinds of classes for Bible Study** we seek to stimulate the churches to attain a better knowledge of the truth and fit themselves for higher service. These classes are of different grades : First, *local classes* for members of one village church, with possibly the immediately adjoining villages. These are frequently held in the winter and spring, and may last from a fortnight to a month. The script and lesson courses are usually the basis of instruction, but other courses are also provided for more mature Christians. These classes involve little expense, and can be held almost anywhere, and they furnish the best opportunity for giving a small group of enquirers and Christians

a grounding in the essentials of Christianity. Secondly, *the larger district classes* in a centre, to reach one section of the district, or in Siaochang itself, to reach the district as a whole. These classes will last a month or six weeks, and many of the scholars will need to leave their farms and settle down at the centre for that period. The best example of this kind of class is the women's class, held in Siaochang after the Chinese New Year. It lasts nearly six weeks, and the number of women attending the class is generally between forty and sixty. These come from different parts of the district, at their own expense and bringing their own food, and they have not only a very happy time, but also a splendid opportunity to study and learn. Nearly all become good phonetic readers, and many of them take the covenant before they return home. The benefit of such a class to the women themselves and to their churches is incalculable. A third type of class is the *Leaders' class* for men. This has been held each winter for the last three years, and lasts about two months. Only baptized Christians are supposed to attend, and an effort is made to secure men of real worth and ability who can go back to their churches as voluntary workers, local leaders who can help to bear the burden of the spiritual work of the churches. The course of study not only includes Bible lessons, but emphasizes habits of devotion and practical work ; many men have been greatly helped to be more efficient and earnest workers in their home churches by this class.

(c) By the association of Churches for fellowship and united service we are seeking to form a strong united church with a common spirit and a common aim. (i.) The *association of local churches* for evangelistic efforts, especially in S.E. Ningchin, has been mentioned above. This kind of work is helping to weld this group of churches into a real unity. In several parts of the district there is also a marked movement towards fellowship through conferences and united gatherings ; thus in the autumn of 1924 one of the churches in E. Nankung invited all the other churches of that region to meet with it for a few days' conference to

consider the development of the church, and over 170 members were present ; and in the spring of 1925, the group of churches in W. Ningchin, some quite old and others very new, gathered at one church for a " Tea Meeting," which was attended by over two hundred Christians and enquirers. Such gatherings may not appear to accomplish much, but they do reveal a desire for union and fellowship, and help to knit the scattered churches together in bonds of love. (ii.) There is also the *association of churches for the district as a whole*, called the " Tai I Huei," or " District Council." This meets once a year, and representatives are sent to it from most of the " T'ang I Huei's" (or " Local Churches"). At present this body is not very strong, but there has been some progress in the last few years, and it is hoped that in time it will really represent, unite, control and serve the churches of the whole district. In the last two years (1923 and 1924), under its auspices, an autumn " harvest " collection has been taken among the churches ; the proceeds of this in 1923 were devoted to helping the evangelistic work of the district, and in 1924 (as noted above) to special Famine Relief for destitute Christians.

(d) In the last few years a new series of methods have been employed to link up the churches and stimulate the Christians to study and read more and to fit themselves for more useful service in the church. These methods, which have been devised and carried out by Mr. Biggin, are the *District Circulating Library*, the *Correspondence Course* for Mission workers and church members, and the *Monthly Magazine* for all the churches.

In order to make these possible, however, a preliminary step had to be taken. A *messenger* was employed to visit our churches, say, once a month, taking letters, books, papers, etc. Sending by post would in our district be more expensive, less reliable, and not suited to the purpose ; a special messenger can visit each part of the district in order, and carry, distribute or collect all the necessary material in a systematic way. In connection with the Library alone he distributes in each round of the stations about 500 books, and collects as many, so that his work

is evidently one of great value and importance. (i.) The *Circulating Library* was started in the Spring of 1923, for the benefit of preachers, teachers and other Mission workers, but later it was extended to church members and enquirers. It began with about sixty books sent to a dozen school teachers; it has now one hundred members, to whom some five hundred books are supplied each month. The books are chosen by Mr. Biggin, but the wishes of the borrowers are followed as far as possible. Only once so far, and that in the case of only one member, has the librarian failed to supply books when applied for; and just in the nick of time a generous gift of over thirty books from Tientsin came to relieve the pressure. But the shelves are normally bare—that is to say, all the books are in constant use. The average life of a book will probably be four or five years. The problem of old books has not become serious yet, and is partly solved by the School Library; fifty books per term are sent to a school, where the pupils appoint a librarian and return the books at the end of the term in exchange for fifty more. Only one such library, however, has been started as yet, as book supplies are very limited. The circulating library, besides the usual four books and a magazine per month per member, also supplies to those who ask for them three wall pictures (mounted) of Bible (or Missionary) subjects and a packet of tracts for distribution. The wall pictures must be returned after a month. (ii.) The *Correspondence Class*, using phonetics as the medium of teaching, was also started in 1923 to help the Christians who wished to study the Bible or other subjects. This class requires most time and care, but is also the most worth while of these methods. There are now four classes and about forty entries. The subjects are Paul's life and letters (for baptized Christians mostly); current events and discoveries (for school teachers and others); selections from the New Testament for enquirers, *i.e.*, lessons on a book which those wishing to be baptized are expected to read. These lessons are prepared by Dr. Sidney Peill, and are the most popular and useful we have. They are in simple language. In each class the students not only

receive lessons, but also answer questions, and take part in discussions. Everything is done in phonetic, and many students have obviously no training whatever in thinking for themselves apart from these lessons. Such students, if they do not give up in despair, make remarkable progress. Owing to the time and attention required from the teacher, this experiment has not been developed as it deserves, but even so the results are very good. (iii.) In the autumn of 1924 a small *Church Magazine*, or paper, was begun and circulated in each of our ninety odd churches. A copy is sent to each church, where it is posted up on the wall for all to see. The paper is largely in phonetic, and can therefore be read by practically all the Christians. Though new, it is proving a useful means of spreading information and rousing interest.

NEEDS.

This Survey would not be complete without some reference to our needs—though some have already been mentioned incidentally—and a brief summary of these is attempted below. They may be divided into two classes according as they are needs of the Church on the one hand, and of the Mission on the other.

I. The Church.

While the Church is growing rapidly and developing in many ways, we cannot feel satisfied with its present measure of attainment, and there are several deficiencies manifest which call for serious consideration and remedy.

(a) There is a *lack* on the part of very many Christians of *any strong personal religion*, such as is fostered by constant prayer and study of the Bible. The majority need to be taught the value of habits of devotion, that the faith of the church may be deepened, and the development of these in the coming years must constitute one of our most important tasks.

(b) There is also, and concurrently, a *lack of appreciation of the ethical demands of Christianity*. Weak faith means little love, and the fruits of the Spirit are not as evident in

our churches as they should be. If the churches are to be efficient instruments for saving men, we must emphasize continually, as necessarily growing out of the life of faith and devotion, Christian conduct, Christian love and Christian service ; and these, not merely as principles, but as applied to the concrete situations in which the Christians are placed.

(c) Again, in most of our churches there is a great preponderance of men, and the number of women and children is comparatively small. The *lack of women members* is a very serious matter from many points of view : (i.) the religious life and activity of the men is often hindered by the indifference or hostility of their womenfolk ; (ii.) there is no religion in the home, and the children grow up without proper Christian nurture ; (iii.) there is no provision for the continuance of the church when the present generation of men has passed away. It is evident that special attention needs to be given to developing the women's side of the churches.

(d) Finally, there is an almost complete *dearth of Sunday Schools* in our whole district. Where there is a boys' or girls' school connected with a church, the teacher will generally teach a Sunday-school lesson to these same scholars on the Sunday ; but in the great majority of the churches there is no effort being made by the church to teach the children of its members the truths of Christianity, and until the children are old enough to attend adult services, they have no lot or part in the life and worship of the church. This again is a problem which must at all costs be solved in the next few years, lest the churches die for lack of the young life which is needed to recruit its energies.

2. The Mission.

When we look at the work from the point of view of the Mission and our task of planting a strong, indigenous church throughout the field, we are deeply conscious of many defects and of much that needs to be, that must be, improved if our work is to remain. Here we can only mention one or two needs which seem to us outstanding.

(a) Owing to the rapid spread of the church, there is a danger that the *instruction of the converts* be done too superficially, and that they do not get a good foundation in Christian truth. Our teaching is done too quickly; much of it is formal and cut-and-dried; often a good deal is omitted for lack of time and only the minimum given. Our preachers have too low a standard of work, and too poor an ideal of what constitutes a church, and are often more anxious to form new churches than to see that the foundations are well and truly laid. We are in great danger of suffering from our very success, and we need to beware lest, in our haste, we use perishable materials and poor workmanship in building the temple of God.

(b) A further weakness is the serious *shortage of thoroughly trained, competent Chinese evangelists*, both men and women. As shown above, the number of the preachers has fallen in ten years from twenty-four to fourteen, and while the number of Biblewomen has increased, they are mostly untrained and therefore cannot do the most efficient work. One of our urgent needs in the next few years, therefore, is to build up a strong, efficient staff of evangelists, and this can only be done if, first, we can find in the churches men and women of real spiritual character, with an aptitude for preaching and teaching, and, secondly, give them both on the field and in class-room the training which will fit them for the special work of evangelization and church planting in the country field. This is a problem to which we must give our most earnest and prayerful consideration.

A FORWARD MOVEMENT.

A reference has been made at an earlier point to a Forward Movement which we are hoping to make in the next few years. Besides the general encouraging condition of the work and our feeling that "God is marching on" in this field, our hope rests on two very special grounds:

1. First there is the generous gift of Mr. Sidney Clark, which provides for the training and maintenance of something like fifty evangelists for the L.M.S. China station, with the object of planting the church widely through all

our country fields. It is expected that a fourth of this number will be the allotted share of North China, and that Siaochang, as the largest country field, will have at least six representatives on the Clark Evangelistic Band in the North. As already stated, eight men are now being tested as candidates for membership in the band, and those selected from this group will be sent to Tsangchow for a two years' Bible training under Mr. Jowett Murray. It is when these men have completed their course, in the summer of 1927, that the new evangelistic Forward Movement will definitely begin. Where it will take place, what methods will be used, whether the Band will work as a whole in one area or be divided into several parts working in different areas—all these questions and many more are still undecided. The main point at the moment is that through Mr. Clark's generosity a new mobile striking force, a body of trained "storm troops" is being prepared, and in due time will be ready to march forward and take possession, in Christ's Name, of the whole Promised Land.

2. Our second ground of confidence for a great advance in the coming years rests on a second gift, made by an anonymous friend of the Society, the object of which is to provide a second (foreign) doctor for Siaochang. We have already emphasized the immense value of medical work for evangelization, and the need for a great development of this work and a closer co-operation with the evangelistic agencies. The coming of a second doctor gives great hope that these needs will be met, and that the next few years will see Medical Evangelism taking its full share in the founding of the Siaochang Church.

For these generous gifts, for these reinforcements to our staff, for these hopes of wider and better work in the coming years, for the assurance of His leading and favour, we offer our humble and hearty thanks to Almighty God.

SURSUM CORDA.

Comparative Table of Statistics, 1914 and 1924.

STAFF.

							Totals.	
							1914	1924
Preachers	..	..	..	..	..	..	24	14
Biblewomen	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	9
Phonetic teachers—permanent	..	..	..	..	..	..	—	3
*Phonetic teachers—part time	..	..	..	..	..	..	—	5
Colporteur	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	1
<i>Total No. of permanent workers</i>							<u>30</u>	<u>27</u>

DISTRIBUTION OF CHURCHES

(according to counties).

Ningchin	W.	..	..	..	..	..	6	..	22
Nankung	S.	..	..	..	..	..	3	..	16
Hsinho	S.W.	..	..	..	..	..	—	..	5
Chinchow	N.W.	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	3
Shulu	N.W.	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	8
Shenchow	N.	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	6
Wuch'iang	N.	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	—
Wuyi	N.E.	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	4
Fuch'eng	N.E.	..	..	..	..	..	—	..	—
Hengshui	N. centre	..	..	..	..	..	3	..	6
Chichow	W. centre	..	..	..	..	..	5	..	9
Tsaoch'iang	E. centre	..	..	..	..	..	3	..	3
Kuch'eng	E.	..	..	..	..	..	9	..	9
Chingchow	E.	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	1
<i>Total No. of Churches</i>							<u>36†</u>	..	<u>92</u>

MEMBERSHIP.

Baptized men (communicants)	..	..	..	?	..	969
Baptized women (communicants)	..	..	..	?	..	358
					..	
<i>Total No. of Communicants</i>	..	..	..	879	..	1327†
					..	
Total of "Covenanted" Christians	..	..	—		..	456†

NOTES.

* Part-time phonetic teachers employed only in winter and spring.

† This figure (36 churches), taken from the names of churches actually given in the L.M.S. China Handbook, 1915, pp. 102-3, does not agree with stated total given on page 100, viz., 50.

† These figures are not quite complete. Probably the total of communicants is about 1,350, and "covenanted" Christians 460.

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